

HENNIKER HIGHWAY SAFETY COMMITTEE
MINUTES FROM MEETING OF
JULY 1, 2008

The meeting was held at the Henniker Fire Department and was called to order at 5:07PM. Members present were: Larry Colby, Leon Parker, Steve Connor, John Margeson and Tim Russell.

Others present were: Lisa Nevins, Bob Nevins and Sgt. Matthew French, Henniker Police Department.

Tim Russell reminded the committee that our charge was to review the speed limit on River Road and to make suggestions to the Board of Selectmen relative to any additional safety measures appropriate for the roadway.

Tim Russell also pointed out that the members of the committee had received copies of the selectmen's minutes from June 17, 2008 regarding this matter. Lisa and Bob Nevins were invited to add any additional information regarding River Road or to highlight or emphasize any points they had brought out at the selectmen's meeting.

Leon Parker said the selectmen forwarded this issue to us because they share the Nevins' frustration and feel they need some commitment, consideration and help regarding their complaints.

Lisa Nevins said that their number one complaint was speed and noise. She said that the road used to be a partial dirt road and hence the speed was not as much of an issue. However, approximately 14 years ago the road was paved completely and since that time she and her family have been struggling with speed and noise. She said that she offers horse trail rides in the summer and part of the ride takes place on the road. She feels this is dangerous because of vehicles traveling too fast. She said she understands the road speed limit is 35 MPH and would like to see it reduced to 30 MPH. She also would like to see the roadway posted as No Thru Trucking.

John Margeson pointed out that there is only one road in Henniker as No Thru Trucking and that is Tanglewood and given the population density it makes sense. He said he feared that if the selectmen made this road No Thru Trucking that they would be opening the floodgates for similar requests from many citizens living on various roadways in town. He also said that he thought enforcement would be an issue because the police would have to discern between thru traffic and trucks making local deliveries, etc.

Both Bob and Lisa Nevins said that in the wintertime school bus traffic is also a huge issue. Pats Peak does after school programs and in the past few years, many school buses coming in from the east have become accustomed to bypassing the downtown area by using River Road. Bob Nevins said that some of the buses are coach types, which are

much larger than a regular school bus. During snowstorms there have been times when buses got stuck at the bottom of College Hill. He does not believe it is safe for school buses to be utilizing this road in the winter for either the buses or the other traffic on the roadway. He said that River Road is now on the GPS route as the shortest way to go to Pats Peak if you are coming to town from the east. He said that this has also significantly increased traffic during the winter months. Bob said that a couple of years ago he contacted Bishop Brady high school about his concerns with their school buses using River Road to access Pats Peak and the school stopped using the road. He said that he felt the town should encourage the schools going to Pats Peak to utilize the downtown route.

Tim Russell said that our committee is the highway safety committee and expressed a concern that if River Road was posted No Thru Trucking that all truck traffic needing to travel south on 114 would be forced to travel through the center of town where both the motor vehicle and pedestrian traffic is much heavier.

Leon Parker expressed concern that River Road may well not be wide enough for trucks to travel safely while passing each other in opposite directions.

Bob Nevins indicated that on two occasions vehicles traveling in the opposite direction have hit the side view mirror on his truck.

Steve Connor pointed out that with the developments located off of River Road and the new ones located just over the town line in Hopkinton that traffic is going to increase naturally over time. He said that he drove by the residence twice a day since Friday and acknowledged the road is narrow in sections which is further complicated when it snows.

Tim Russell said that relative to speed, over the past couple of years the police department has spent more time on River Road monitoring traffic than any other secondary road in town.

Larry Colby asked what the other neighbors would think if the speed limit was reduced to 30 MPH. He said he would hate to punish the neighbors that are law-abiding citizens.

Tim Russell pointed out that the speed limit on the Hopkinton end of River Road is posted at 30 MPH and he feels that the speed limit on the road should be consistent end to end whether it is 30 or 35.

Steve Connor said that in other towns he has seen signs posted to the same post as a speed limit sign that state something to the effect “Speed Strictly Enforced by Radar” or

“Speed Limit Strictly Enforced”. Steve also pointed out that River Road has probably seen a significant increase in traffic this summer by motorists trying to get around the construction on Route 202/9.

Tim Russell said that committee member Cindy Marsland could not make the meeting but in an e-mail he received from her she said that she was in favor of reducing the speed limit to 30 MPH and posting the road as No Thru Trucking.

Steve Connor made a motion to recommend to the board of selectmen that they increase the sign package on River Road to include signs that say “Speed Strictly Enforced by Radar” or something similar. Larry Colby seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Leon Parker made a motion to recommend to the board of selectmen that they reduce the speed limit on River Road to 30 MPH and that the speed limit be posted accordingly. Tim Russell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Larry Colby recommended that the committee ask the Board of Selectmen to send a letter to Pats Peak asking them, in turn, to send a letter to the schools participating in the winter ski programs that would encourage the schools to have their buses use the downtown, Route 114, roads to access Pats Peak. Although no formal motion was made the committee felt this was a very good idea.

The committee decided to take no position on the No Thru Trucking request. The committee essentially wants to see if the recommendations made to the selectmen as a result of this meeting will help alleviate some of the problems the Nevins had described and thus make it unnecessary to post the road as No Thru Trucking.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:04PM.

Minutes recorded and transcribed by: Tim Russell, Chair of the Committee